

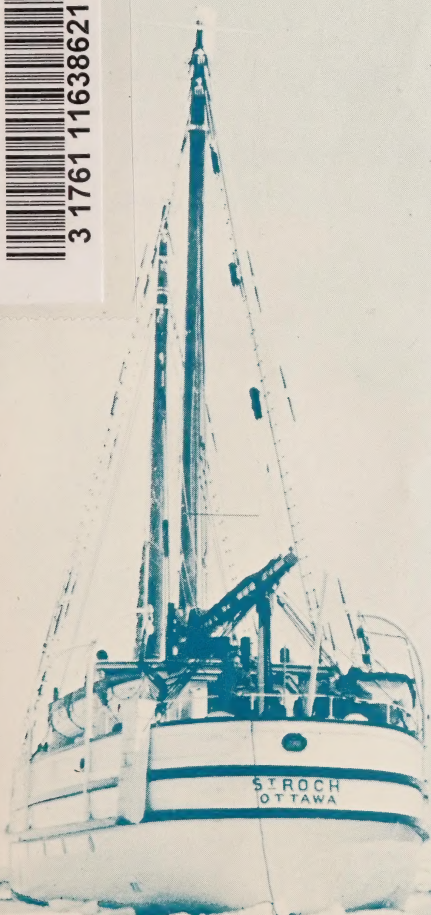
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# ST. ROCH


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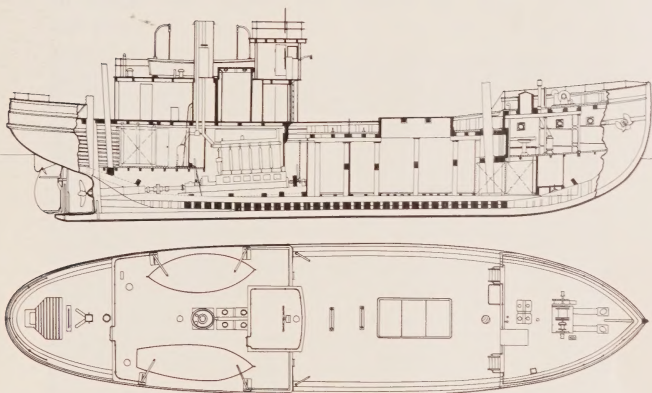
ROYAL CANADIAN  
MOUNTED POLICE  
SCHOONER



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# ST. ROCH

PAST AND PRESENT



Length—104 feet

Beam—25 feet

Draft—12½ feet, 13 feet fully loaded

Tonnage—80 tons

Hull—Douglas fir, sheathed with Australian gumwood or "Ironbark"

Engines—originally 150-h.p., increased in 1944 to 300-h.p.

Union Diesel

The "St. Roch" was built in 1928 by the Burrard Dry Dock Company at North Vancouver for the R.C.M.P.'s Arctic patrol service. In anticipation of her future battles with the shifting northern ice, her builders used thick timbers of Douglas fir, and covered her hull with sheets of durable Australian gumwood. The result was a tough, versatile vessel capable of making long patrols, carrying supplies to the remote R.C.M.P. detachments in the North, and spending long winters locked in the Arctic ice.

In 1940 the skipper of the "St. Roch", Sergeant Henry A. Larsen, received orders to sail from Vancouver to Halifax by way of the Northwest Passage. This route, the goal of explorers for centuries, had been conquered in an east-west direction by Amundsen in the "Gjoa" in 1903-06, and had not been traversed since.

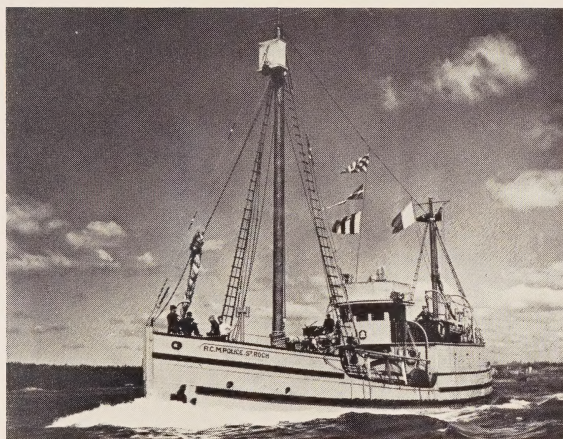
The "St. Roch" left Vancouver on June 23, 1940, and for the next 28 months the vessel was home to Sergeant Larsen and his nine-man crew. At times the going was very rough, for the year 1940 was, as Larsen laconically put it, "bad for ice." The vessel spent the winter of 1940-41 at Walker Bay on the west side of Victoria Island, and was not freed from the ice until July, 1941. Two months later the "floating detachment" was frozen in again, this time at Pasley Bay near the Magnetic Pole; and remained there until August, 1942.

Later in August Larsen found a lead of open water and, navigating gingerly among strong currents and fast-moving ice, sped her through the dangerous Bellot Strait. The "St. Roch" met one of her hardest tests in the Strait, but withstood the pressure of the grinding ice. The long voyage ended at Halifax on October 11, 1942, and the "St. Roch" became the first vessel to navigate the Northwest Passage in a west-east direction.

In preparation for the return voyage in 1944, the "St. Roch" was repaired, and her 150-h.p. diesel engine replaced by a 300-h.p. unit. Larsen was ordered to return to Vancouver by way of the Lancaster Sound route. The 7,295 mile voyage began at Halifax on July 22 and was completed at Vancouver on October 16—a short passage of 86 days that made the "St. Roch" the first vessel to complete the Northwest Passage in both directions. In her later years the "St. Roch" carried out several Arctic patrols. In 1950 she sailed from Vancouver to Halifax via the Panama Canal, earning notice as the first to circumnavigate the North American continent. When the ice-breaker H.M.C.S. "Labrador" completed her east-west trip through the Northwest Passage in 1954, it was the "St. Roch" which escorted her into

Vancouver. In that same year, the veteran of the Arctic waters was turned over to the City of Vancouver by the Federal Government to become an important attraction at the future marine museum. On the advice of the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada the "St. Roch" has been declared of national historic importance.

The impressive shelter constructed by the City of Vancouver is the first stage in a joint municipal-federal project for the preservation and restoration of the "St. Roch".



*"St. Roch" leaving Halifax, N.S., for Vancouver, B.C., 1944*



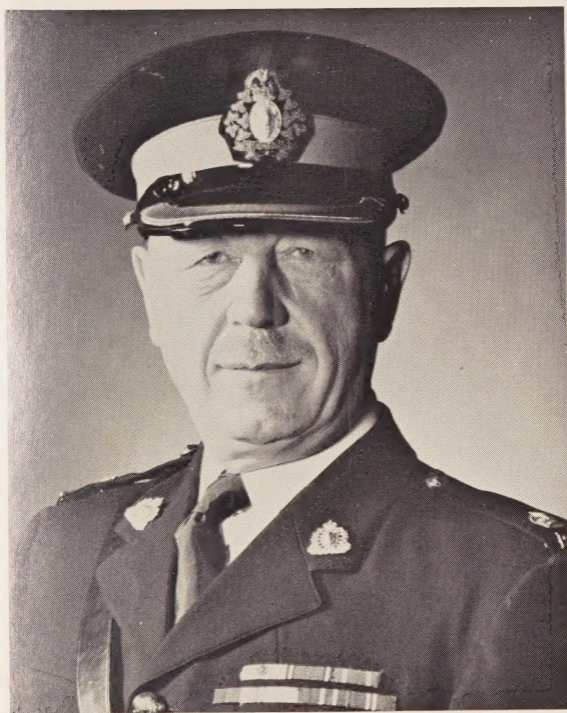
Superintendent Larsen was born on September 30, 1899, at Fredrickstad, Norway, a community near Sarpsborg, the home of Roald Amundsen, the first man to conquer the Northwest Passage. Since boyhood, Larsen had admired Amundsen and wished to equal his hero's accomplishments. Thus, when he retraced his hero's course in the Arctic, Larsen realized a lifelong ambition.

He joined the R.C.M.P. in 1928, after becoming a naturalized Canadian. Before this he spent six months in the Norwegian Navy and had made two Arctic voyages as mate and navigator on the "Maid of Orleans", which sailed out of Vancouver. He was a graduate of the Norwegian School of Navigation and served as first officer on a transatlantic liner.

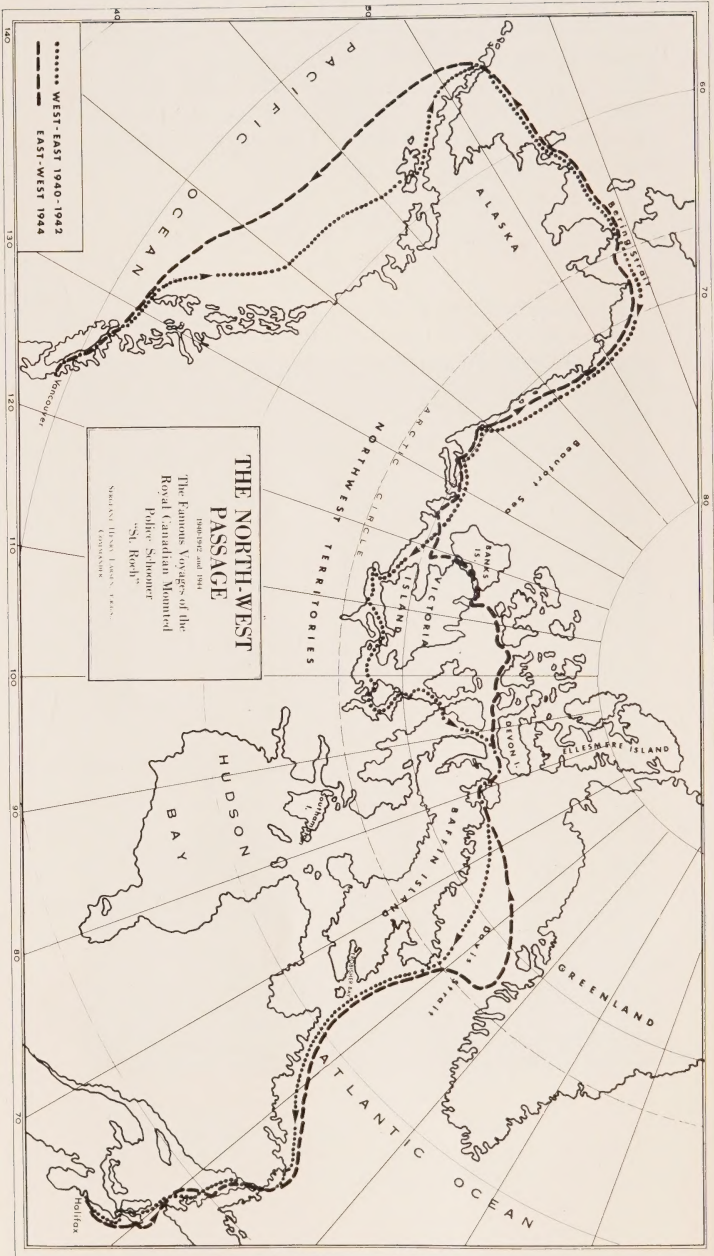
Superintendent Larsen commanded the R.C.M.P. Ship "St. Roch" on her voyages through the Northwest Passage from west to east in 1942 and from east to west in 1944. He was commissioned a Sub-Inspector in the Force in September, 1944, promoted to Inspector in 1946 and to Superintendent in 1953. He was a Fellow of the Royal Canadian Geographical Society, a Fellow of the Arctic Institute of North America and an honorary member of the Royal Geographical Society. He was awarded the Patron's gold medal by the Royal Geographical Society and he has also been awarded the Polar medal and bar. He was the first to receive the Massey Medal of the Royal Canadian Geographical Society which was presented to him by Governor-General Vincent Massey on September 12, 1959.

Superintendent Larsen was a graduate of the Canadian Police College. From 1949 until his retirement on February 7, 1961 he was stationed at Ottawa

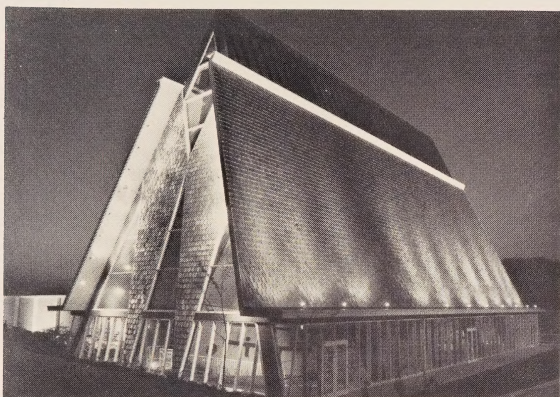
in command of "G" Division of the Force, whose work deals with the Northwest Territories and the Yukon. In May, 1961 he received the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws from Waterloo University College. Following his retirement Superintendent Larsen resided at Lunenburg, Nova Scotia and at Vancouver, B.C. After a brief illness, Superintendent Larsen died in Vancouver on October 29, 1964 at the age of 65. He was buried in the R.C.M.P. Cemetery at Regina, Saskatchewan.



*Superintendent*  
**HENRY ASBJORN LARSEN**  
1899 - 1964



# THE SHELTER



*Photo by Vancouver Sun*

The structure measures 120 feet in length and 50 feet in width, with an overall height of 66 feet. Below grade the "dry dock" consists of reinforced concrete floors and walls. Above grade the main structural elements are a series of glued laminated wood "A" frames supporting tongued and grooved wood decking. The exterior finish is cedar shingles and the liberal use of glass set in aluminum frames. This shelter combines aesthetic beauty with complete protection.

Canadian Historic Sites Division,  
National and Historic Parks Branch.

Printed under the authority of the Hon. Arthur Laing, P.C., M.P., B.S.A.,  
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